

The Open Mike^{District 2}



A Newsletter From Councilman **Mike Knapp**

Volume 3, Number 2

Spring 2007

A Moment at the Mike

Digging Out and Getting Plowed

For the most part, we've had a decent winter. For much of the season, we had temperatures hovering around the Unseasonably Warm reading on the thermometer, enough so that bulbs and trees around our area were fooled into sprouting and budding almost eight weeks too early. Still, those of us who have lived here long enough know we're always due for at least one good snowstorm a year—and sure enough, winter arrived with a vengeance in mid-February.



A winter wonderland in name only, the February ice storm was a challenge for road crews.

It was a doozy. The Valentine's Day Storm, as it's come to be called, was a nasty love letter to our county. Snow, freezing rain, and temperatures in the 20s made for slick roads, bad travel, no school and cancelled events – and sent snow and ice removal crews scrambling. The ice that glued itself to the roads eventually only came off in enormous chunks, piled up at the roadside like rubble and making a drive down Germantown Road look like a cruise through a demilitarized zone.

Responsibility for plowing and clearing roads and sidewalks in the county falls to a number of varying jurisdictions, sometimes depending on which road or sidewalk it is. The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT), Maryland State Highways Administration (MSHA), and, in some neighborhoods, private contractors who work for a community, are responsible for the plowings. My staff and I spent several days chasing down snowplows, trying to get snow removed from roads and sidewalks as quickly as possible. I know there are some places where it seemed to take forever—and some still where snow and ice weren't removed until warm temperatures melted it.

For the most part, DPWT did a good job clearing county roads, though sidewalks took more time, as did some of the lesser traveled roads. For roads under the county's jurisdiction, main and arterial roads are plowed first, while cul-de-sacs are plowed last -- which caused some

continued on page 2

Digging Out *continued from page 1*

heartburn. We all deal with the snowplows shoving plowed snow up at the foot of our driveways. I don't like it either, but it's one of the quirks of living with snow. In many communities, I know neighbors rallied to clear driveways and sidewalks ahead of the county, and helped ensure that elderly or disabled residents were able to get in and out of their driveways and houses.

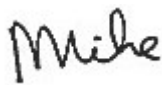
For roads under the county's jurisdiction, main and arterial roads are plowed first, while cul-de-sacs are plowed last -- which caused some heartburn.

While the county did a relatively good job of getting its roads clear -- and I know there's room for improvement -- I'm less pleased with the performance of MSHA. Plows were slow in clearing many of the Upcounty's major roadways—the 117, 118, and 121, for example—and making things worse, plows sometimes damaged sidewalks, medians, or road signs. Other places snow and ice were pushed up onto sidewalks, making walking impossible. If you see any damage along the state highways, whether it's to a curb, sidewalk, or median, please let me know so I can report it to MSHA.

Once the snow passes, however, and we make our way toward spring, there's a good chance we're going to start seeing potholes and other incidental damage from plowing on county roads. You can let me know of such damage by [e-mailing me](#), or by *calling DPWT directly at (240) 777-6000*. DPWT has also set up a web-based form where residents can report potholes, while at the same time submitting a request to have the hole patched and filled. [Click here](#) to use the web-based form to report a pothole in your community.

Hang in there – spring is just around the corner. And if there's anything else I can do to help, [send me a message](#) or give me a call at (240) 777-7955. It's my pleasure to serve.

Regards,



Mike Knapp
Councilmember, District 2



Councilmember Mike Knapp
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850
[\[Click here for a map.\]](#)
(240) 777-7955

Councilmember.Knapp@montgomerycountymd.gov

FY2008 Budget

Knapp Tightens Budget Oversight

Two New Reports Provide Greater Budget Clarity, Transparency

In late February, the County Council released two reports that I believe will be valuable tools for helping us tighten oversight of county agencies and budgets. The reports, prepared for the Council by the [Office of Legislative Oversight](#) (OLO) at my request, reflect a desire to provide a greater degree of transparency in government so we'll have a better idea of what we're getting with your money. That way, we'll know how we can continue to budget better, and more responsibly, in the coming years.



The first report, *Key Fiscal Indicators for Montgomery County Public Schools*, provides a detailed set of fiscal indicators to help Councilmembers and other policymakers better understand and oversee the Montgomery County Public Schools' \$1.85 billion operating budget. The OLO report outlines twelve fiscal indicators, organized into three major categories – revenues and expenditures, budget components and cost drivers, and per-student expenditures – providing, for the first time, a greater degree of familiarity with, and clarity within, the MCPS budget.

As Chairman of the Council's Education Committee, I take very seriously the responsibility that comes with the fact that we will spend nearly \$2 billion on K-12 education in FY 2008. The education budget is not only large, but complicated. The indicators and other information contained in this report will help us, and the public, better understand where our money comes from, and what it's being spent on.

The OLO report is an important tool in helping us have a better, more informed conversation.

While the County Council does not set education policy in the county – we leave that to the elected officials on the [Board of Education](#) – our role as the keeper of the budget means we need to ensure we understand what it is we're getting for taxpayer money, and whether our investments are achieving their intended results. Are we getting the best bang for our buck? The OLO report is an important tool in helping us have a better, more informed conversation with MCPS as we discuss their budget, and a major step toward transparency and accountability in budgeting.

The second report, *Base Budget Review of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service – Phase I*, also provides us with a more comprehensive look at the delivery of fire and rescue services in our county. We have made a significant investment in Fire and Rescue over the last four years to increase our ability to deliver fire and rescue services; now it's time to make sure that those additional resources are being used effectively to improve the safety of our county residents.

As always, data should be used cautiously. But ideally, both these reports will allow us to have a better conversation among ourselves, with residents, and with our state delegates. I'm always for transparency in government, and these are two more tools we have available to make things clearer and easier to understand.

County Executive Proposes Budget of \$4 Billion

Knapp Steps Up Call for County Agencies to Set Spending Priorities

County Executive Isiah Leggett will send his proposed \$4 billion FY2008 budget to the County Council on Tuesday, March 13. For the next ten weeks, the Council will devote its time almost exclusively to the budget which, under the county charter, must be approved by the Council by June 1.

As the lead sponsor of the 2005 legislation that required county agencies to set funding priorities for their programs and projects as part of their budget proposals, I'm committed to continually ensuring that we get the most out of *your* money. Each year, the Council makes difficult decisions regarding the allocation of county resources. By requiring agencies to inform us of which projects or programs under their jurisdiction are most critical, we can make certain that we fund those projects first. That's a decision you make every day as you work to live within your means; you deserve a government that spends your money with the same amount of care and attention that you would.

Back in 2005, I also called on the County Council to adopt a budget that fell within the boundaries of the Charter Limit. The Charter Limit reflects the amount of property tax we can collect in a given fiscal year. As taxpayers, you rightly want the Council to meet the needs of our communities and our county while also insisting that we live within the limits of what we – meaning *you* – can realistically afford. For that reason, I'm pleased the County Executive's proposed budget stays within the Charter Limit. That's a budget you can afford.

I asked OLO to prepare two reports that would help us better understand our investments in education and public safety. I look forward to applying a similar degree of scrutiny to the rest of the County Executive's proposed budget, and appreciate having his recommendations.

Information, Please!

What Is The Charter Limit?

Section 305 of the [Montgomery County Charter](#) --the county's instrument of government adopted by county voters-- outlines the requirements for approval of the budget and tax levies:

SECTION 305

By June 30 each year, the Council shall make tax levies deemed necessary to finance the budgets. Unless approved by an affirmative vote of seven Councilmembers, the Council shall not levy an ad valorem tax on real property to finance the budgets that will produce total revenue that exceeds the total revenue produced by the tax on real property in the preceding fiscal year plus a percentage of the previous year's real property tax revenues that equals any increase in the Consumer Price Index as computed under this section.

continued on page 5

Chairman's Corner**Education Committee Begins Budget Sessions**

On February 13, the [Montgomery County Board of Education](#) approved the \$1.85 billion FY 2008 Operating Budget for Montgomery County Public Schools proposed by Superintendent Jerry Weast. This proposed budget includes not only funding for teacher salaries, employee benefits, and other costs associated with the day-to-day activities of a school, but also contains a number of recommended policy initiatives, including elementary school improvements, middle school enhancement, and changes in special education.

Approval of these and other such policy changes fall within the jurisdiction of the Board of Education. However, with its oversight of the MCPS budget, the County Council has the opportunity to discuss any of MCPS' proposed policy changes, ask how the funding that is being requested for these policies is being used, and what the expected results are for the investment. One of the reasons I asked the Office of Legislative Oversight to prepare a report on key fiscal indicators for MCPS is so the committee will be better equipped to have just such a discussion with MCPS.

For the next two months, the Education Committee will hold regular worksessions on the FY2008 Operational Budget for MCPS, as well as for Montgomery College, and, in a joint session with the HHS Committee, Pre-Kindergarten programs, Linkages to Learning, and other services. Just below, you'll find a calendar with the date and times for the Education Committee's meetings on the operational budget.

For more information on the MCPS budget, visit:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/budget/index.shtm>

The Charter Limit *continued from page 5***In English, please....**


The Charter Limit determines how much money the county can collect through property taxes in the coming year. The charter limit allows for an overall increase in the amount of money government collects because property taxes from new construction are added to the prior year baseline, and existing property taxes grow with the rate of inflation.

If the cost of paying for critical services exceeds the amount of money the county will take in through the charter limit, then a supermajority of seven councilmembers, instead of a simple majority of five, is needed to approve the budget.

Education Committee Schedule

The information is subject to change, so please check the Council's website as dates near for updated information. Unless otherwise indicated, all committee meetings will take convene in the 7th Floor hearing room of the Council Office Building.

DATE	TIME	MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION
April 9	9:30 a.m.	FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets: MCPS
April 12	2:00 p.m.	FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets: MCPS
April 18	2:00 p.m.	<u>Joint HHS/ED Committee Meeting</u> <u>FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets:</u> - Linkages to Learning - Wellness Center - School Health Nursing - Pre-K Services - Child Care Curriculum Training - Private/Public Partnerships
April 20	9:30 a.m.	FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets: MCPS
April 25	9:30 a.m.	<u>FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets:</u> - Community Use of Public Facilities - Montgomery College - CIP Amendments: Montgomery College
May 2	2:00 p.m.	<u>FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets:</u> - CIP Amendments: MCPS
May 3	2:00 p.m.	<u>FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets:</u> To Be Determined
May 4	9:30 a.m.	<u>FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets:</u> MCPS



Germantown Library Celebration

Saturday, March 31, 2007
7 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Germantown Public Library
19840 Century Boulevard
Germantown, MD 20874

Join us for an elegant evening as our community celebrates the opening of Germantown's new library.

Entertainment ■ Tours ■ Heavy Hors d'oeuvres ■ Desserts

Attire: Black Tie/Blue Jeans
Cost: \$50 per ticket

For more information, please call 301. 926.9685
or write to laurav@vepublicrelations.com

Register online at www.vepublicrelations.com/glc.html

Germantown Library Open For Business

Bibliophiles, rejoice! On March 8, I had the pleasure—at last!—of attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new [Germantown Library](#), a beautiful 44,000 square foot facility in Germantown Center.

It's been a long time in coming. The community has advocated for this project for over a decade, and we're thrilled to have this new library open for business. As a longtime supporter and promoter of the library, I've been working for the past several years to overcome ignored deadlines, lost contractors, and missed opportunities that kept pushing the opening date for the facility back. While the delay was frustrating – and I admit to doing [my share](#) of screaming about it – the end result can certainly be said to be worthwhile.

The multi-level facility sweeps visitors through easily-identifiable sections of the building—children's books, pre-teen and young adult, and adult—with plenty of quiet and secluded rooms and nooks for reading, studying, meetings, or one-on-one tutoring. Thirty-seven computers are available for public use, but if you're the kind who likes to sit and write on your own laptop, or just check e-mail, while you linger over the newspaper, wireless access is available throughout the building.



I encourage you to drop in and take a look around – at 180,000 volumes and growing, chances are good you'll find something at the library that convinces you to sit awhile (and if you're still having trouble hunting something down, head librarian Maria Pedak-Kari and her staff are always willing to help). And with a Montgomery County library card, you can return any book you check out of the Germantown library at any other county library—and vice versa.

The Germantown Library formally opened its doors to readers on March 8.

The Germantown community can be very proud of the facility, another gem in an increasingly sparkling town center, and I'm proud of the community's hard work to bring this facility from vision to reality. As I said at the ribbon cutting, quoting one writer, "Libraries aren't built, they're grown."

The Germantown Library is a testament to the commitment and advocacy of the Germantown and Upcounty community.

The Germantown Library is located at 19840 Century Boulevard, next to the BlackRock Center for the Arts. The library is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Wednesday from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Sunday (through May) 1 to 5 p.m. To reach the library, call (240) 777- 0110; TTY 240-777-0901.

Knapp Testifies in Support of State Legislation for Mass Transit

Transportation—and mass transit in particular—is a key issue in Maryland. It's especially critical in the Upcounty region, where we have long stretches of county and state roads, rural and small communities but, apart from a reliable bus system, very little in the way of other mass transit options. That's one of the reasons why I'm always interested when legislation is introduced in the Maryland State Assembly to help provide additional resources for mass transit.

On February 27, I traveled to Annapolis to testify before the House Ways and Means Committee in support of several state bills that would provide a dedicated source of funding for mass transit. Each of the bills under consideration—[H.B. 393](#), sponsored by [Delegate Sheila Hixson](#), and [H.B. 434](#), sponsored by [Delegate Charles Barkley](#)—would allow the state to carve out a piece of sales tax revenue to dedicate to mass transit.

One of my goals as a Councilmember is to encourage, and hopefully ensure, that our region adequately invests in transportation infrastructure, and especially in mass transit options. In the Washington capitol region and Maryland in particular, we have work to do to overcome investments in transit that have traditionally lagged behind our overwhelming demand.

Metro, for example, is a great success, but with every day that goes by that there aren't sufficient operating funds, we put its future success at risk. Presently, Maryland's Congressional Delegation is cosponsoring [H.R. 401](#), Congressman Tom Davis of Virginia's legislation to authorize additional Federal funding for [Metro and WMATA](#) – but that legislation is contingent on a commitment from the various jurisdictions that they will obligate state funding as well. Last year, only the District was able to approve legislation for additional funding. I am hoping all three jurisdictions will do so this year.

But that's not all—the revenue that would be generated and collected by these bills can be put to good and immediate use in communities around the state. These additional resources can be used to jump-start new, critical projects like the Corridor Cities Transitway in Montgomery and Frederick counties, the Bi-County Transitway for Prince George's and Montgomery County, and the proposed Red and Green lines in Baltimore. Each of these projects could immediately benefit from the increased investments these bills would provide – but funding could also be used to improve or create new mass transit systems anywhere in the state, from the far reaches of Garrett county to the tip of Worcester.

We have communities throughout the state with a variety of transportation needs that haven't been addressed, because they never believed the resources would be available to help them pursue such projects. With these bills, such resources would be available.

I encourage you to contact your State Senators and Delegates ([click here](#) if you're not certain who that is) and [Governor O'Malley](#) to let them know of your views on mass transit.

Three New Fire Stations Slated for the Upcounty

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue (MCFRS) Capital Improvement Program for FY2007-FY2012 includes \$100 million for MCFRS projects. For FY07, the Council appropriated \$45 million for 14 MCFRS projects. Three of those projects directly impact District 2. They include the construction of the Clarksburg, East Germantown, and West Germantown Fire/Rescue Stations. The creation of these new stations will help to improve response times to fire and rescue calls in District 2. I'm glad to see these projects are underway and will continue to strive to improve the safety of all county residents.

Council Seeks Applicants to Fill Vacancies On Charter Review Commission, Planning Board

The County Council is now accepting applications to fill vacancies on several commissions, boards, and advisory committees in the county. The major qualification for any of these posts? A sense of community, and a will to make things better.

Charter Review Commission



The Council is accepting applications for members of the [Charter Review Commission](#). The County Charter was amended in 1976 to provide that a Charter Review Commission shall be appointed by the County Council every four years to study the Charter—which is essentially the Constitution and assorted laws that cover our county. The Commission researches and evaluates Charter issues raised by the County Executive, County Council, other government officials, and the public. Commission reports are submitted no later than May 1 of every even-numbered year. These reports contain recommendations concerning any proposed Charter amendments.

The Commission is composed of eleven residents of the County, five of whom are appointed from a list of names submitted by the County Executive. Six members will be appointed by the

continued on page 10

A Friendly Reminder...

You've Changed Your Clocks. Now Change Your Battery.



You made the jump forward an hour. Now jump on a chair and test the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home. Better yet, replace the batteries altogether. It only takes a moment, and the \$20 you spend on batteries is a worthwhile investment to keep you around.

Working smoke alarms save lives. Ensure you have a working smoke alarm on each floor of your home. Additional smoke alarms can be placed in sleeping and kitchen areas. Test your smoke alarms monthly, and change the battery when you change your clock twice a year. If your smoke alarms are powered by your home's electrical system consider installing battery powered smoke alarms as a back up in case of a power outage.

Changing smoke alarm batteries twice a year is one of the simplest, most effective ways to reduce tragic deaths and injuries from fire. In fact, working smoke alarms nearly cut in half the risk of dying in a home fire. For more information, or if you are a Montgomery County resident and would like a free home safety evaluation, call the Safety in Our Neighborhood Home Inspection Hotline at (240) 777-2476.

Vacancies *continued from page 9*

Council. The chair is designated by the Council and the vice chair is designated by the County Executive. No more than six members can be from the same political party.

Applicants should submit letters of interest, including resumes, to:

Marilyn J. Praisner, President
Montgomery County Council Office
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Applications must be received no later than 5:00p.m., Wednesday, April 18, 2007.

Resumes should include professional and civic experience and home and office telephone numbers and email address. Letters and resumes submitted by applicants are made public as part of the appointment process. Members of County boards, committees and commissions may not serve on more than one such group at a time.

Montgomery County Planning Board

The Montgomery County Council is seeking applicants to fill two upcoming vacancies on the five-member Montgomery County Planning Board.

No more than three members of the Planning Board may be from the same political party, and all members must be residents and registered voters of Montgomery County when appointed. Members serve four-year terms and are limited to two full terms. The two open positions may be filled by a Democrat, Republican or a voter who declines to affiliate with a party, or is a member of another party officially recognized by the Board of Elections. Annual compensation for Board members is currently \$25,000. The Council is considering legislation to increase compensation to \$30,000. The increase would be effective for new appointees.

The Planning Board serves as the Council's principal adviser on land use planning and community planning. Planning Board members also serve as Commissioners of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Some of the Board's responsibilities with regard to planning include preparation and amendment of County General Plan, preparation and amendment of Master Plans and functional plans, and offering advice on the planning implication of capital facilities and programs of the County Government, Montgomery College, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and Montgomery County Public Schools. The Planning Board also sits as the Park Commission and approves the annual Parks Department operating budget and Capital Improvements Program, land acquisition contracts and major development contracts for parks, development plans for individual park facilities, policies for park operations, and park user fees.

The Montgomery County Planning Board meets all day every Thursday and often meets on one other evening a week. The entire Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission meets the second Wednesday of every month. On average, a Planning Board member can expect to spend at least two full days a week in scheduled and informal meetings. Additionally, substantial time is required for preparatory work and other activities related to Planning Board responsibilities.

continued on page 11

The Upcounty Road Scholar

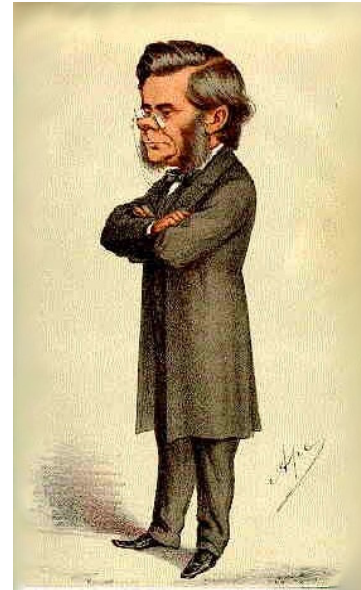
Drain Repairs in Boyds, Bridge Repairs on Blunt

Got a road that needs repairing? A traffic light that's out? Is there a street or intersection that you think needs a stop sign or crosswalk? One of my responsibilities is to make sure someone knows about it -- and to do what I can to get you information on your question or request as quickly as possible.

I stay in regular contact with the [Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation](#) (DPWT) and the [Maryland State Highways Administration](#) (MSHA), and provide each agency with a list of projects that need addressing in the Upcounty. Both agencies receive countless requests each week, and getting a response back can take some time. So bear with me -- if you don't see a particular project listed here, that doesn't mean it has been forgotten or neglected, but rather that I haven't received an updated report on its progress this month.

With this in mind, the Road Scholar section of *The Open Mike* provides an opportunity to give you the latest information received from DPWT, MSHA, and others on the progress of requests that have been submitted on your behalf. It's also an opportunity for you to [let me know](#) of other projects that may need to be undertaken in your community.

continued on page 12



Got a question about roads, sidewalks, or construction in your area? [E-mail the Road Scholar](#) and let us know.

Vacancies *continued from page 10*

Letters expressing interest, including a resume listing professional and civic experience, should be addressed to:

Council President Marilyn Praisner
County Council Office, Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 25, 2007.

It is the Council's policy not to consider applications received after the deadline. After the April 25 closing date, Councilmembers will review the letters of application and select applicants for interviews to be held in June. Letters of application are made public as part of the appointment process. The names of all applicants are published and available for public review and interviews are conducted in public. A resume of professional and civic experience should be included with letters of application. A financial statement of assets, debts, income, and family property interests will be required of all applicants; only the candidate appointed will be required to make the financial statement available to the public.

The Road Scholar *continued from page 11*

Department of Public Works and Transportation

Drain Repairs on the Pedestrian Underpass at Boyds Train Station: Because of complaints about flooding at the underpass at the Boyds Train Station, I asked DPWT to look both the symptom and the cure -- what was causing the flooding, and what could be done to fix it? DPWT Director Art Holmes recently informed me that the drains and basin had been clogged by a large amount of stones, poured into the drains by "persons unknown." Regardless of who perpetrated such scalawaggery, you and I are responsible for paying for the repairs, and DPWT will clear the drains this summer, utilizing \$10,000 of its Capital Development project funding to clean up the mess.

Traffic Study for Brink Road at Goshen: An investigation is underway at this intersection to determine if any changes to existing traffic controls are needed to improve overall operations and safety. These studies normally take 45-60 days. I'll post any information on changes at this intersection in upcoming installments of The Road Scholar.

Repairs to Blunt Road: The rains and weather of the past months severely damaged a bridge on Blunt Road. Concerned residents inquired whether the repairs to the bridge required an environmental impact study, due to its proximity to Seneca Creek. Because repairs to the bridge were part of a FEMA-approved emergency project, there was insufficient time to undertake a formal EIS, nor was one required. Nonetheless, DPWT informs me that it remains sensitive to the need for care when it works in or around environmentally-sensitive areas like Seneca Creek. Crews repairs the bridge while ensuring that contaminants did not enter the stream area. Residents in the area have reported that the newly-constructed bridge appears to be quite sturdy, and that the surrounding area does not appear to have been compromised. Let's hope so.

Sidewalks in the Village of James Creek: Responding to requests from the James Creek community, DPWT has inspected the condition of sidewalks in the area and acknowledges the need for repairs. DPWT is hoping to make repairs to sidewalks in this area in the upcoming construction season.

Traffic Signal at Father Hurley and Wisteria Drive: I request regular updates from DPWT on the progress toward installing a traffic signal at this intersection. Here's the latest information I received from DPWT Director Art Holmes, which is worth reprinting in its entirety:

"Since we last wrote to you on this issue, we have learned that the developer did conduct a signal warrant study in 2002/2003 as required by the Planning Board, and submitted that study to Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for review. The developer's study was never forwarded to DPWT for review/acceptance. We have just recently obtained a copy of that study. The developer's consultant concluded in that study that a traffic signal was not warranted. Based on our review of the study, *we do not agree with the consultant's conclusion*. We are now working with M-NCPPC to ensure that the condition of approval placed on the developer to construct the traffic signal if warranted is fulfilled. M-NCPPC is scheduling a meeting with the developer, their attorney, and the developer's consultant to discuss this issue."

The Road Scholar appreciates this update from DPWT, and applauds DPWT's diligence in ensuring that Montgomery County taxpayers don't get stuck holding the bag to pay for a traffic signal that should be installed by a developer. Keep watching this space for more information as it becomes available.

Vox Pops**Voices From Around the Upcounty Community**

A Note from Mike: I receive countless phone calls, e-mails, and letters each day. Most are passionate, many are frustrated, and a few are downright funny . . . but all of them are thoughtful and well-intended. I think readers of The Open Mike will be interested to hear what their Upcounty neighbors have to say, whether they're across the street or across the county. With that in mind, the "Vox Pops" section of my newsletter features highlights from some of the correspondence and phone calls I've received in my office over the past month.

Building Near A Metro Is Folly

"The idea of building around the Metro to reduce traffic is a myth in my judgment. First of all, the Metro is a financially defunct operation. Secondly, the Metro is not engineered to handle any significant growth due to lack of things like brake design, structural problems, etc. So, building near the Metro is a folly. It is not Smart Growth. It is building the traffic solution on a foundation of sand. When you say the goal is to preserve open space that means that more and more density occurs in the existing developed areas by 'densification.' So who benefits? The people in the developed areas just get more traffic, pollution, noise, school congestion. It is not a win-win situation. Now the County wants to aggravate the Shady Grove area by dumping another 'undesirable' service location in our area. Wonder what future buyers at Metro will think when they know they have it in their backyard?" -- Pat

Affordable Senior Housing: Everybody Wins

"Our society should embrace our aging community and welcome them as an integral part of a well balanced community. The knowledge, experience, and patience of seniors surely benefits society. Diversity in our communities breed strength. We cannot have a healthy community unless it is demographically balanced. Your proposed zoning amendments are a necessary step to achieving the inclusion of senior housing projects into everyday communities.

"There are many families without extended family in our area. Because of our proximity to Washington, DC and major corporations there are many transient families moving and shaking their way up the career ladder. This pulls them away from grandparents, aunts, uncles, and elderly relatives—and more importantly the wisdom and experiences of the elderly population. Everyone will benefit from including seniors in our lives and neighborhoods. So much can be learned from the elderly—with an appreciation of the past we are able to be who we are today. Bring them in!" -- Hillary

Plowing? What A Snow Job!

"I am writing to express my outrage at the job done in Montgomery County, with regard to snow removal. I have already raised this issue with the State Highway Administration but I do not expect much from them given their track record on snow removal. But my outrage is about what the road crews did when they did clear the roads! They dumped the ice on the side walks! Huge front end loads dumped in the middle of cleared sidewalks forcing pedestrians into the street! What has been done to correct this? Shame on you for not getting this corrected immediately!

"What I really want to know is who is being held responsible for this malfeasance? Is it not possible to get anyone at the Highway Administration that can keep our roads passable? Doesn't the County have any communication with our State leaders? Why can't we get plows out on the roads?" -- Jeff

County Council Public Hearings Calendar

All Budget, All The Time

Don't be shy! The County Council regularly holds public hearings at which we actively seek your input, thoughts, comments, and suggestions. The policies, amendments, and legislation under consideration aren't just pieces of paper; they have a very real impact on you and the lives of your fellow citizens. For this reason, residents are always encouraged to attend the public hearings and give us your views.

Hearings are held in the Council's main meeting room on the 7th Floor of the County Office Building at 100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville. ([Click here for a map.](#)) If you wish to testify on any of the items listed below, please call (240) 777-7931.

One more thing -- the hearing schedule can change rapidly, so always check the [County Council's home page](#) to get the most up-to-date information.

DATE	TIME	MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION
March 20	1:30 p.m.	Bill 4-07 : Outdoor Lighting - Standards - Established ZTA 07-01 : Outdoor Lighting Standards Supplemental Appropriation to the Montgomery College FY2007 Capital Budget and Amendment to FY2007-2012 CIP: - \$1,300,000 for Takoma Park Campus Extension
March 27	1:30 p.m.	ZTA 07-02 : Buildable Lot - Clarification ZTA 07-03 : Workforce Housing - Option Special Appropriation to MCPS' FY2007 Capital Budget and Amendment to the FY2007-2012 CIP: - \$1,152,000 for HVAC Replacement and Planned Lifecycle Asset Replacement
April 9	7:00 p.m.	FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets and Amendments to FY2007-2012 CIP
April 10	7:00 p.m.	FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets and Amendments to FY2007-2012 CIP (continued)
April 11	1:30 p.m.	FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets and Amendments to FY2007-2012 CIP (continued)
	7:00 p.m.	FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets and Amendments to FY2007-2012 CIP (continued)
April 16	7:00 p.m.	FY2008 Capital and Operating Budgets and Amendments to FY2007-2012 CIP (continued)

The Open Mike Wants You!

Are you sponsoring an event or having a meeting, and want to invite residents from around the county to participate? Did you or your organization win an award? If you have information you'd like to submit for possible inclusion in an upcoming issue of *The Open Mike*, please [e-mail us](#) and let us know.